

BLUES DRIVE THEM W

Tooting & M. I. Wycombe W. 2
(after extra time)

WYCOMBE Wanderers, favoured nationwide for Amateur Cup honours, drove more than a thousand 'Blues' fanatics into a wild frenzy when they pulled out all the stops in the crucial climax to Saturday's second round replay at Sandy Lane.

It might have been the Cup Final itself as Keith Blunt's late equaliser and Geoff Anthony's extra time winner loosed a stampede of spectators onto the pitch.

But then Saturday's battle royal was enough to incite the most impartial: and certainly enough to disturb Wealdstone, the club which now receives Wycombe at Lower Mead in the third round on January 31.

To progress into the elite final pool of 16, both teams ran themselves non-stop.

Two players, opposing right backs Ian Rundle and Brian Feeney, were booked by referee Mr. Bray in the second half. Yet the niggling fouls had been part of the match from the first minute, and, with so much to play for, it was only to be expected. Thankfully these tactics never became a preoccupation.

Indeed, there was more positive work to be done. And, recovered from his bout of tonsillitis, John Delaney made sure his men did it.

Viv Busby's knee injury made it easy for Anthony to be fitted back in the side, in which both he and the evergreen Charlie Gale were outstanding.

Having won back ground advantage with a goalless draw at Loakes Park the previous week, the South Londoners showed magnificent determination in their bid to offset Wanderers' superior skills.

Two booked as Wycombe win through

BY MIKE WHITESMAN

But, the onus was now on Tooting to take the game to their visitors, causing them to stretch and weaken their defence — the one asset which had kept their interest alive in the first meeting.

Wanderers, hoping for exactly this more adventurous outlook from their rivals, planned and profited accordingly.

Peter Suddaby often moved upfield² to add weight of numbers to attacks, and they soon brought Norman Stanley into play.

Searle and Hutchinson (twice) both sent the ball close to the woodwork in the early minutes. But chance of the half dropped into Anthony's lap after 26 minutes, when, turning to seek out an open space in the Tooting area, he rolled his shot tamely wide of the mark.

Later the Welsh amateur international winger was to become Saturday's match winner and hero. But the memory of his miss lingered on and seemed to bear painful significance when Tooting cheekily broke up a Wycombe

raided to score from nowhere in the 45th minute.

As the first half wore on, Wycombe had grown increasingly more involved with their search for a goal and consequently slackened their cover to a thin line of three.

Tooting left-back Gaydon spotted and exploited the situation by sending a long punt upfield, putting Ken Jelly clear through to shoot his side into an interval lead.

Ironically, Wycombe spent nearly all the game in charge yet wasted almost half of it chasing an equaliser — and went dangerously close to running out of time even then.

Things were going against them when Rundle had his name taken for a high tackle after 56 minutes.

Manager Brian Lee played his ace card by throwing substitute Blunt into the final 25 minutes, to replace Johnny Hutchinson. The hope was obvious — that Blunt, the most attacking midfield man on Wanderers' books, would boost Wycombe just enough to shatter Tooting's defensive wall.

Wycombe raised their pace and strengths to the limit, only for Tooting to absorb it all with a certain amount of luck and a lot of grit.

But as suddenly as they had gone one down, so Wanderers pulled back on level terms again, from a free kick taken by Suddaby and planted home by Blunt himself.

Tooting had gone a long way and exhausted their reserves so far that extra time must favour the visitors. Yet they weren't assured even yet of another 30 minutes. Searle had a 'goal' disallowed for offside, and only Gaydon tripping Anthony just outside the box stopped Wycombe from clinching it there and then.

Such was the pressure on the home team that at the end of a lengthy period of injury time, Feeney joined Rundle in the referee's book.

Extra time called for the survival of the fittest, and even drained the seemingly limitless energy of Anthony. He had missed the first tie to play for Wales at Ballymena, but made up for it by working ceaselessly in the replay.

It was fitting therefore that Geoff should have the privilege of scoring the winning goal in the fifth minute although thanks to a pass from Searle and the unsinkability of Horseman, who held off three Tooting backs before crossing along the goalface, his task was an easy one with a clear net to shoot at.

Tooting & Mitcham: N. Stanley;
B. Feeney; G. Basford; D. Bishop; J. Webb; K.
Jelly; D. Hutchinson; W. Smith; C.
Keel; G. Phillips.
Wycombe Wanderers: J. Maskell;
I. Rundle; C. Gale; P. Suddaby; B.
Delaney; L. Laidlow; N. Anthony; B.
Baker; K. Searle; A. Horseman; J.
Hutchinson (sub: K. Blunt).
Attendance: 2,190